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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0248
INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 3590
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 9194
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE 4181
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA IMMEDIATE 9252
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BEIJING IMMEDIATE 3929
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 2167
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 1074
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000391

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DEPT FOR SA/INA, PRM

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2016

TAGS: PREF PREL PTER NP

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES BHUTANESE REFUGEES WITH
INDIAN AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty, Reasons, 1.4 (b/d).

Concern About Bhutanese Refugees...

¶1. (C) In a February 9 discussion with Indian Ambassador Shiv Mukherjee, the Ambassador conveyed our concerns about the lack of progress toward a comprehensive, durable solution for the Bhutanese refugees. The Ambassador noted that we expected Foreign Minister Pandey to send a letter to his Bhutanese counterpart inviting him to come and settle the terms and conditions for return and set a two month deadline for action. Pandey would likely notify Thimpu that, if there were no returns within two months, Nepal was prepared to internationalize the issue. The Ambassador explained that only Nepal's seemingly legitimate concern that Bhutan could expel the 100,000 ethnic Nepalese still living in Bhutan at a later date had kept Kathmandu involved in the bilateral process.

... But India Has A Good Relationship with Bhutanese King

¶2. (C) Mukherjee agreed that it was key for Bhutan to take back a few refugees to set a precedent to prevent further expulsions, but acknowledged that it was unlikely. The Ambassador stated that, failing Bhutan's accepting any repatriation, the international community should try to get a strong guarantee that Bhutan would not do any further ethnic cleansing. He suggested that India might be able to play a role in arranging for such a guarantee. Mukherjee commented that India had a good relationship with Bhutan and that the Bhutanese accommodated many of India's interests. Even though the Government of India (GOI) understood that Bhutanese refugee camps festering in Nepal could prove a source of instability, he admitted, "Nobody in New Delhi wants to lean on the Bhutanese King."

Comment

¶3. (C) An Indian role will be key in achieving a durable solution to the Bhutanese refugee problem. While sympathetic

to the political realities, the GOI does not yet appear to want to assume a role that could antagonize Thimpu.

MORIARTY